1664

Coll. Wakefield.

[*A steady Attachment to the Christian Faith the peculiar Duty of its established Ministers.*]

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ALNWICK, IN NORTHUMBERLAND,

AT THE PRIMARY VISITATION OF

THE HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND,

SHUTE,

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE, LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM;

HELD BY COMMISSION

On WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1792.

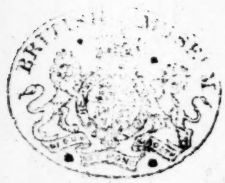
BY

EDWARD AURIOL HAY DRUMMOND, A. M.

RECTOR OF ROTHBURY.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF

THE CLERGY OF THE DEANRY OF ALNWICK.



TO

THE REVEREND

THE CLERGY,

OF THE

DEANRY OF *ALNWICK*,

THIS DISCOURSE

IS MOST HUMBLY

AND

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

A

SERMON.

2 Tim. i. 13.

Hold faſt the form of ſound words, which thou haſt heard of me, in faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus.

THIS is a charge of ſuch magnitude, and conveyed in terms ſo peculiarly comprehenſive, that a retroſpective view of its concomitant and intereſting circumſtances claims our conſideration.

It appears, by the general tenor of this Epiſtle, that St Paul was ſtill agitated by the tempeſt of dangers and perſecution, — harraſſed by a variety of Opponents, and now fettered by the hand of Imperial power.—Theſe accumulated troubles were rendered more oppreſſive by the natural infirmities of his advanced period of life, and could afford him but little proſpect of continuing much longer his Perſonal

labours: —Yet, ſtill zealous for the ſucceſs of the great cauſe, — the one undivided object of his aim, — we behold him in all the glories of an undaunted Apoſtle, chaſing before him the errors and deluſions of his aſſuming and Phariſaical Opponents. Here we obſerve him alſo peculiarly marking the puſillanimous defection of thoſe Apoſtates from his doctrine, who left him, in his perils and poverty, to follow thoſe new Teachers, who were undermining the foundation of the Churches, which he had ſo lately planted in Aſia.

On this view of the ſituation of St Paul, as well as that of the prevailing Hereſies of Epheſus, we ſee this addreſs to his choſen, *and his own dearly beloved Son in the faith* *, not only to be pertinent, but forcible, and immediately neceſſary.

Timothy was then at Epheſus; and, though young, yet how well qualified to fulfil the diſtinguiſhed Commiſſion, lately conferred on him, may be drawn from the few traits of his character here recorded, "*that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures*†; was inſpired with the powerful influence of the ſpirit of God; was grounded and ſettled in the faith and principles of the Goſpel; and enabled alſo, by

* 1 Tim. i. 2.—2 Tim. i. 2.

† 2 Tim. i. 5, 6.—2 Tim. iii. 15.

natural, as well as acquired, ability, to refute the gainſayers *according to the Prophecies which went before concerning him* * ."

St Paul, impreſſed with a conviction of theſe extraordinary qualifications, as well as of the integrity of his lately-conſecrated Biſhop; and at the ſame time anticipating, with a lively ſenſe and well-grounded apprehenſion, the evils that would ariſe from the ſeeds of Hereſy, ſo induſtriouſly ſcattered through the chriſtian world, urges this neceſſary and ſalutary caution with all its energy — *Hold faſt the form of ſound words, which thou haſt heard of me, in faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus* †.

It ſeems to be needleſs to dwell long on a critical diſquiſition of the words ὑποτύπωσιν ἔχε ὑγιαινόντων λογων. — Paſſing over the various interpretations given to the word ὑποτύπωσις, I ſhall only obſerve, that it appears to be the generally received opinion that this word implies ſome ſhort form, or ſummary of the chief doctrines of Chriſtianity, which had been delivered, probably, by oral tradition, when Timothy received his Commiſſion to propagate the Goſpel at Epheſus; and from which articles of faith the Heretics of thoſe days had departed.—With regard to the form itſelf, though we cannot, at this

* 1 Tim. i. 18. † 2 Tim. i. 13.

day, avail ourſelves of its exact expreſſion or import, from the general acceptation of the word; yet the want of theſe cannot be of any eſſential moment to us, as the Apoſtle himſelf evidently lays not the emphaſis ſo much on it, as on the words ὑγιαινόντων λογων, adding the relative ὧν, not ἧς, παρ' ἐμοῦ ἤκουσας; which *words*, not which *form*, thou haſt heard of me.

On the whole then it appears, that, whatever doubts may have ariſen reſpecting the form itſelf, the chief aim and end of the Apoſtle in this paſſage was to guard Timothy againſt the falſe doctrines of thoſe times; and to confine him, both in precept and in practice, to thoſe ſound principles, the baſis of which was Evangelical Truth, — the unerring Word of God.

If adherence to a right faith was of that ſerious importance, as to warrant ſuch a caution as this in the Apoſtolic age, in order to counteract the influence of thoſe Hereſies which took their birth from the ſuperſtitious errors of Oriental Philoſophy; *from the vain babblings, and oppoſitions of ſcience falſely ſo called* *: If in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, it was found neceſſary to check and refute the abſurd tenets which *then* prevailed; of how much greater importance muſt

* 1 Tim. vi. 20.

we feel it in theſe days, when the refinements of philoſophy, the wild ſpeculations, and the inſidious arts of modern Theoriſts; the flaming ſpirit of Sedition, and all the diſcordant views of numberleſs diſſatisfied, reſtleſs, and inconſiſtent Separatiſts, as unſettled in their exterior forms as in their interior doctrines, are all combined for the malignant purpoſe of undermining the fabric of our juſtly admired Eccleſiaſtical Eſtabliſhment?

In them we perceive a deliberate and obſtinate aim to confound the invariable diſtinction between truth and falſhood; and, by the favorite and faſcinating pretext of liberty of Conſcience and freedom of Enquiry, now contended for with ſo much plauſible and inſinuating addreſs, to oppoſe the ſhallow ſophiſtry of man to the infinite wiſdom of God; and to aſſert, without a ſhadow of regular argument, that it is prejudice and habit alone which govern the general opinions of mankind.

But it requires no extraordinary ſagacity to penetrate, by a comparative view of their conduct, their inmoſt ſentiments, and the dark receſſes of their hearts; where we may perceive a ſelfiſh attachment, a lure to decoy others to countenance their principles; and a guard-

ed, though ſubtle, contrivance to approach juſt ſo near the confines of wrong as not to incur perſonal danger.

In them the pretence of a tender conſcience, or the want of a more extenſive toleration with regard to articles of faith, are the too evident marks of a diſingenuous diſpoſition to cover ſome malignant deſign: For if they heartily wiſhed to know the truth, the mind would be more open to conviction, and the conſcience leſs embarraſſed with ſcruples and doubt.

On the contrary, we perceive in them an arrogant and confident attempt to eſtabliſh, as the ſtandard of truth, the pernicious fallacies of new-fangled Hereſies, under a fantaſtic pretence of meliorating the received notions concerning the very fundamental articles of the Chriſtian Faith; as if the principles of natural and Revealed Religion had not yet been fully inveſtigated, or properly underſtood; and that they alone were the perſons * of ſuperior wiſdom, and peculiarly

* According to the ſentiments, and nearly in the language of Locke, (vol. 4, p. 167, 4to edit. and p. 67 and 68, 8vo.) "Some men think, in direct oppoſition to the laws of reaſon and religion, "to reduce Theology to abſtract ideas; to a ſyſtem to be treated of in the terms of the Laboratory; "to be aſſayed and refined by an analytical proceſs: But *this would be as abſurd as to introduce lines "and diagrams into the ſtudy of Divinity, or run Natural Philoſophy into Metaphyſical notions.*—Such "men cannot direct their minds aright to the knowledge of God, who can make ſuch undue mix-

qualified to diſcover and repreſent Goſpel-truth, and to decide upon, arrange, and explain all its arguments.

And if we, farther, reflect how uneaſy theſe Free-thinkers are under any reſtraint, how fond of change, and how willing and anxious to controvert and wreſt every opinion that favors not their fancies, nor harmonizes with their intereſted views; our wonder will at once ceaſe at this ſpirit of Innovation, this ambitious ardor for diſtinction, this thirſt of aboliſhing wholeſome maxims, well weighed and approved by the wiſdom and ſcrutiny of Ages.——But though it is not probable that a luxuriant and playful Imagination, temporiſing arts, or an unfair and partial repreſentation of any matter, ſhould ſo far effect any immediate change in the eſtabliſhed tenets of mankind, as to wean the general attachment from the true ſpirit of our Civil or Eccleſiaſtical Polity; — yet it muſt be admitted, as highly probable,

" tures; who, by a fondneſs for what they have found uſeful by experiment in one art or ſcience, " transfer it to another, wherewith it hath no manner of affinity or connexion, and where it only " ſerves to confound and pervert the underſtanding *It is a certain truth, that " res nolunt male ad-* " *miniſtrari;* " *it is no leſs certain " res nolunt male intelligi.*" *Things themſelves are to be conſidered as* " *they are in themſelves, and then they will ſhew us in what way they are to be underſtood. For to have* " *right conceptions about them, we muſt bring our underſtandings to the inflexible natures, and unalterable re-* " *lations of things, and not endeavour to bring things to any preconceived notions of our own.*"

Locke on the Conduct of the Underſtanding.

that the ſubtle poſitions of the Philoſophical Politician, the ingenious and brilliant language of the Hiſtorian, or the dazzling chimeras of the Empiric Reformer, may ſo far charm and captivate the ſuperficial, the credulous, or thoſe who read only to gratify idle curioſity, as may firſt attract their attention, and finally pervert their judgment; — becauſe they have not either talents of head to detect, or integrity of heart to confute, their lurking fallacies.

From theſe modes and inſtruments of inſinuation and deceit, it follows, that if a doubt can be raiſed on any queſtion which is dark in its nature or tendency; or, on any event, which by diſtance of time is not plain and obvious to common apprehenſion — the proud Theoriſt is inwardly gratified; —— and then, by every ſpecious art of Perſuaſion, is farther encouraged ſo to amuſe the curious, miſlead the lukewarm and careleſs, as may induce them to coincide with the licentious principles, and profligate habits, of the day; and at laſt becomes faſtidiouſly elated with the hope of having gained one Proſelyte to his Cauſe.

It is however ſtill a happineſs to think, as was hinted before, that, notwithſtanding the ſanguine efforts of minds ſo diſordered, and diſtort-

ed; to overthrow the ſettled laws and order of things, is indeed an arduous as well as hazardous undertaking: And we flatter ourſelves, that few will become converts to their ſchemes, except thoſe, who, from their courſe of life, have already too much reaſon to wiſh for confuſion in faith and manners, and *to love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil**.

But, ſtill, the evils which may poſſibly ariſe, in times ſo critical as the preſent, from the propagation of theſe viſionary tho' popular theorems, unwarranted by Holy Scripture, and ſupported only by illogical and inconcluſive reaſoning, muſt awaken our attention to defend, with unremitting vigilance and accuracy, thoſe ſound and eſſential principles of the Chriſtian Faith, with which all our private comforts are intimately and ultimately connected, and upon which the public welfare ſo eſſentially depends.

To perform this duty with full effect, and to do it upon true and proper principles, derived from ſacred Authority, it behoves us earneſtly to ſearch for every aid which Reaſon and Revelation can afford.

* John iii. 19.

If St. Paul thought it expedient to urge to his beloved Fellow labourer, the neceſſity of a well-informed mind, as the beſt defence againſt the adverſaries of the Faith; how much more cogently ought his charge to operate upon us to exert all thoſe faculties which may enable us to inculcate the truth with efficacy and ſucceſs, and ſtrengthen our own, as well as the attachment of others, to the Religion of Chriſt; ſince we cannot boaſt the ſuperior talents, or the diſtinguiſhed privileges which marked that age, when the extraordinary gifts of the holy ſpirit ſupplied all human defects; and, more eſpecially, when we reflect, that it is our peculiar duty and profeſſion to confirm the wavering, inſtruct the ignorant, ſatisfy the doubtful, convince the gainſayer, and enforce the general practice of religious and moral virtue?

To ſecure theſe valuable ends, we muſt begin our reſearches, diveſted of every kind and degree of prejudice, and free from all bias to intereſt or party; we muſt carefully peruſe and compare the whole of the inſpired writings; and ſo well weigh, and digeſt their ſeveral doctrines, and moral precepts, as to be thereby enabled to reconcile one with another, and, by that means, avoid contradiction both in reality and in appearance.

Thus guarded, thus prepared, no ſudden doubts or oppoſition can eaſily perplex or diſtreſs us; nor any unknown queſtion, ſuddenly occurring, convict us of ignorance on points immediately connected with our profeſſion.—Then what true and joyful confidence muſt He feel, whom neither the aſſertions of poſitive or ſuperficial men can miſlead; nor the inſidious arts of ſcepticiſm and infidelity can either delude or corrupt! He will, on all occaſions, be enabled *to ſhew himſelf approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* †.

To a mind ſo furniſhed and ſo diſpoſed, the ſyſtem of nature, the knowledge of God, the hiſtory of his providence, and the miracles of mercy wrought for mankind in their redemption by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, being cleared from all doubt, and digeſted into a ſyſtem of certainty, will recommend themſelves as the moſt valuable objects of meditation to which the mind of man can be directed.

It is by the enquiry of a mind, like this, that the real nature and relation of all things is to be known ſo far as they can be aſcertained; paſſion is compoſed, reaſon is awake, and ſuch reſolutions are accordingly deduced, as become the permanent maxims, and the

† 2 Tim. ii. 15.

leading rules of its conduct, not to be effaced by ſarcaſtic deriſion, not to be affected by the calumnies, the humours, or the wanton levities of the diſſolute, nor to be impaired by the gentler influence of faſhion and caprice.

To the mind, leſs under the dominion of pride than humility, religion and morality appear on their proper baſis, and in their native and lovely colours; their relations to each other are diſtinctly obſerved, and their comparative obligations minutely weighed, aſcertained, and adjuſted.

Of Morality in all its branches; — of the duties which belong to men, as Individuals, or as members of Society; — as rational Agents only, or as acting under the light and influence of Revelation, — every inquiſitive and unprejudiced mind would wiſh to obtain the cleareſt notions.——That mind alone will moſt readily make theſe diſtinctions, which is well furniſhed with all that true Philoſophy has pointed out, as the evident duty of ſuch a Being as Man; and from thence can diſcern *where* it is that Revelation hath principally benefited the world, and *what* it is that we may hope to find in the Scriptures, and in them alone.

The knowledge of Divine things, thus purſued, and pertinently applied, cannot fail to ſecure a ſincere and hearty attachment to that *Form of ſound Words*, the Eſtabliſhed Religion of this Country; — an Eſtabliſhed Church, — mild in diſcipline, enjoining ſuch ceremonies and obſervances as are few, ſimple, and decent, requiſite to maintain a due ſolemnity and decorum in her Worſhip; — ſufficient to keep alive, not to diſtract, the attention; well adapted to the conſtitution of human nature, which requires ſome addreſs to the ſenſes, as well as to the intellect; inſtituted as means to promote ſentiments of Holineſs and Unity; not as artifices to inflame the paſſions, much leſs to operate as charms to the expiation of ſin, or barter away the real intereſts of the ſoul: — But the criterion of her diſtinguiſhed excellence is, that ſhe grounds the immutability of her doctrines on the authority of the Holy Scriptures, becauſe ſhe can clearly deduce their origin from God.

A Church, thus founded, aims only at prevailing by fair perſuaſion, and a candid condeſcenſion to the infirmities of man; well knowing, that *Compulſion* or *Deceit* are not the inſtruments to advance the Truth of the Goſpel, — and that the convictions of reaſon are the proper motives to, the beſt foundations of, *a reaſonable ſervice* *.

* Rom. xii. 1.

In full confidence in theſe our principles, it behoves us, my Reverend Brethren, to exert all our care and influence to add ſtrength to this our happy Conſtitution, and thus promote the peace and comfort of the moderate and ſober-minded.—To attain this important end, let us pay our utmoſt attention to the right improvement of our minds, and cultivate all thoſe gifts and amiable virtues which are calculated to give credit and ſtability to our Order.

And if either pretended, or preſumptuous, Cavillers will not be readily gained by the inherent force of our doctrines alone; let us further try whether we cannot prevail upon them to give attention to theſe doctrines from our moſt earneſt endeavor to practiſe them ourſelves; and thus give us credit for our ſincerity, and eſteem the *work for our very work's ſake*.

If this can, in any degree, be effected by us, let us preſs forward to teſtify, by a zeal adorned with integrity and with meekneſs of behaviour, ſuch a ſteady adherence to the cauſe of Truth, as may induce them not only to receive, but *to hold faſt the form of ſound words in faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus* †.

And if we thus manifeſt ourſelves Patterns of knowledge and good

† Titus ii. 15.

works, *let no man deſpiſe us:* As the weight of the commiſſion we bear, the uprightneſs of our Intentions to diſcharge it, and the obvious tendency of our doctrines to ſecure the public Intereſts, Civil, as well as Religious, entitle us to a more candid judgment, than we, of the preſent times, can truly boaſt of; when men are too forward to conſtrue natural foibles into real faults; and to fix their cenſure more on the quality of the Offender, than on the nature of his offence.

As the beſt antidote to this too prevailing and unchriſtian propenſity, let all, and more eſpecially let us, my Reverend Brethren, be ever careful not only to remember, but, ſyſtematically, adopt into our lives and converſations, the advice of the Text; that is, to proſecute all our religious enquiries and purſuits on the pure and amiable principles of that faith and love which is in Chriſt Jeſus. This will not only vindicate our conduct, as Men, but our Religion, as Chriſtians, — and will, alſo, give ſtability to, and engage confidence in, that eſtabliſhed and reformed branch of it to which we belong; and for the credit of which, it is, therefore, our duty to retain a manly and temperate concern, both as Members and Miniſters.

May therefore this, and each ſucceeding, Age add firmneſs and protection to the venerable Conſtitution of our Church! long

with unſullied luſtre, may it flouriſh, under the tutelar Auſpices of a Prince, who has ever diſtinguiſhed himſelf, as the Example of Piety in public and in private life; the Friend of Learning, and the Patron of merit!

May its higheſt offices ever be diſcharged by men eminent for virtue, — the Examples of every thing great and good; — and may we, and all, its Miniſters, by the purity of our doctrines, and the conſiſtent rectitude of our manners, unite to advance the great ends of our Miniſtry, — the Public Good, — the preſent and future happineſs of all! —— Then, may we truſt that the mercy of the Moſt High will continue to pour down bleſſings on this favoured, this favied, Land; — this Land of Liberty; — where Religion appears, to the impartial eye, diſtinguiſhed, as moving in her own proper ſphere, — in her true and native Beauty, — adorned with every Grace and Virtue, — and accompanied by every Bleſſing —— "*Length of days on her right-hand, on her left-hand Riches and Honor; — A Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her!*"

FINIS.

4 AP 65